

Just Friends by TheMikeWheelers (jasongracefully)

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Summary:

The Kiss Cam didn't care if Mike and El were just friends.

Just Friends

“We’re just friends!”

Mike had a scarlet blush making its way down his neck. Of course they were just friends. Sure, him and El might occasionally hold hands or stare at each other for just a few seconds too long, but wasn't it obvious they were just friends? The thought frustrated Mike, but it wasn't like he could help what other people saw.

And right now apparently a lot of people saw them one way. In fact, an entire stadium full of people thought they were a couple.

It all started when Steve's father had gotten him tickets to the Pacers game. Mike wasn't the biggest basketball fan, but Steve had invited him, Nancy, and El. He figured it would just be an ordinary game, he didn't expect to be put in the most awkward position of his life.

Yet here he was, projected on the Kiss Cam with his best friend besides him.

“We’re not, uh, we’re not like that!” Mike tried yelling, wanting nothing more than for all the attention to be taken away from him.

El nudged his arm, “Mike...”

Yet the cheers around the court continued, screams echoed, begging for them to kiss.

Mike couldn't help but notice the smug grin Nancy wore next to him. She was the only person who knew of Mike's feelings for Eleven, feelings which he would deny until the day he finally came to her for advice. While she was a supportive sister, she couldn't help but tease Mike whenever she had to opportunity.

The thought of kissing El wasn't what embarrassed Mike. He had done it once before and honestly, he would love to do it again. But he knew there was no way El returned his feelings, he didn't want to humiliate himself by kissing the girl he loves in front of thousands of people, when she was just doing it for the camera.

“She's just my friend! We're not gonna kiss!”

In that moment Mike pleaded with God. He wanted to disappear into thin air, to suddenly transport back to his house where he didn't have to face this humiliation, or El's doe eyes staring up at him.

Then, as if his prayers were answered, the camera switched over to a different pair of people on the other side of the court. Mike let out a sigh of relief, glad his moment in the spotlight was over.

“You missed your chance,” He heard Nancy whisper into his ear. He didn't respond, refusing to meet her eyes.

Nancy didn't understand. Mike had loved Eleven since they were kids. Now they were sixteen years old and he still harbored his feelings for her, knowing there was no way they could be reciprocated. So he silently pined after her, the girl who became his best friend, when all he wanted was to be more than a friend.

The thought of kissing her had passed Mike's mind, a lot. But every time he made the decision to ignore the impulse, it would do nothing but embarrass him. He wasn't about to change his mind at a time when thousands of people were watching them. El could get mad at him for kissing her, or worse, she could smile and brush it off as if it didn't matter. That thought terrified Mike more, the idea of it meaning nothing to her.

Mike tried to tune out his thoughts, staring up at the Kiss Cam. Now it was on a different couple a few rows behind them, then it went over to an elderly couple down by the front. He was just glad it was over for him, silently envious of all the people he watched. They were all happy with their significant others, kissing was normal for them, not a kind of humiliation the Kiss Cam brought.

A part of Mike wished he could be like that, he could date a girl he loves and be in a position where finding himself on the big screen was just another excuse to kiss her. Unfortunately, that wasn't where Mike was right then. He had found the girl he loves, but kissing her was a whole different story.

Then, as if God himself had come down from Heaven just to seriously

mess with Mike's day, he saw his own face plastered on the screen once again.

The camera had come back to him and El, relentless in the quest to make them kiss for everyone.

"Mike," El grabbed his arm, "It's just a kiss."

Just a kiss. She didn't know that was what bothered Mike. His heart broke in half upon hearing her say that. It was as if his worst fear had come true, kissing Mike would really mean nothing to El. It would be just a kiss, no strings or feelings attached.

Little did Mike know, El was having her own dilemma herself. Seeing them on the camera had brought upon her own fear, but she tried to suppress it. She wanted to come off as calm and collected as she could, not let it hint to Mike how much her heart was pounding. But then he had started yelling how they were just friends, why was he so against kissing her? Why did that thought disgust him so much?

El tried to remain composed, so she told Mike it was just a kiss. In that moment she just wanted her humiliation to be over. First she had attention brought to her on the giant screen, and then she was very publically rejected by Mike in front of everyone.

"Are you sure?" Mike asked her, not wanting to push her into anything.

El nodded and leaned in, cupping his cheek with her hand. She felt her heart beating out of her chest, but kept moving towards him.

They closed their eyes and let their lips touch, just for a second, before feeling mutual blushes creep up their cheeks and they moved away.

They both had similar thoughts throughout the kiss, just trying to ignore the fact that this was both of their first kisses since the time in the middle school when they were twelve years old. Their hearts pounded, and they seemed to forget for a moment that there was anyone else around.

Mike pulled away, the realization that he had just *kissed El* was

finally sinking in.

"I, uh, I gotta go," He stood up and started walking up the stairs, not wanting anyone to see his face.

"Mike!" El called after him, but he ignored her and kept going.

He had gotten to the top of the stairs before he felt a hand pull on his arm. He turned around to see El, obviously upset, staring at him.

"What are you doing?"

Mike grumbled, "I can't sit there next to you after that, I'm sorry," He turned back around and kept walking.

"Was it really that bad for you?" He stopped in his tracks, hearing the crack in El's voice, before marching back over for her.

"Of course it wasn't bad for me! Don't you realize that's the problem?!"

"What are you talking about?"

Mike could feel all his self-control going out the window. All the feelings he'd been bottling up for years were pouring out, turns out all it took was a crack of humiliation for them to spill everywhere for the world to see, "I've been in love with you since we were twelve years old, El! I don't want to sit there and pretend things are perfectly fine when I know the only time I get to kiss you is when a stadium full of people are chanting for me to, when I know that that kiss meant nothing to you!"

It went quiet between them. Cheers could be heard from the game, hundreds of people were talking around them, but in that moment, Mike and El's worlds were silent.

"You're in love with me?" She broke the silence with a small voice.

"Of course I am, and it's about time I accept that you're never going to feel that way back. I need to go," Mike turned around once more, leaving El behind him.

She watched as he went, her mind not able to wrap around what he had just told her. Did he really think she could never love him back? El figured that was ridiculous, Mike was everything to her. He was the boy that took her in during the storm, the boy who explained words to her and always seemed to understand her, the boy who stood up for her no matter what. She would do anything for Mike, she had been in love with him since they were kids.

“Mike!” She called out after him, “Mike!”

El ran ahead to where he was, cutting him off from the front.

“Do you really think that kiss meant nothing to me?” Mike wouldn't meet her eyes, nodding slowly.

“That's ridiculous. You're my best friend, Mike, my entire world. Do you have any idea how many times I've wanted to kiss you?”

“What?” He practically splurged out.

“You're a mouthbreather, Mike,” El walked closer to him, now standing just inches from his face, “Of course I'm in love with you too.”

That set Mike out of his self-pity, he put his hands on El's cheeks and kissed her once more. She ran her fingers through his hair, kissing back passionately, putting all the feelings she'd held in for years into the kiss. She could feel Mike smile through the kiss and she grinned too, before pulling away to take a breath.

They stared at each other, and for a moment it felt like out of the thousands of people in the stadium, they were the only ones there.